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ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR NATURAL DISASTER REDUCTION

Report of the Second Committee (Part V)*

Rapporteur: Mr. Rae Kwon CHUNG (Republic of Korea)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Second Committee held a substantive debate on agenda item 98 (see A/52/629, para. 2). Action on sub-item (d) was taken at the 42nd and 47th meetings on 17 November and 4 December 1997. An account of the Committee's consideration of the sub-item is contained in the relevant summary records (A/C.2/52/SR.42 and 47).

II. CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT RESOLUTIONS A/C.2/52/L.20 AND A/C.2/52/L.37

2. At the 42nd meeting, on 17 November, the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania, on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of 77 and China, and Mexico, introduced a draft resolution entitled "International cooperation to reduce the impact of the El Niño phenomenon" (A/C.2/52/L.20), which read:

"The General Assembly,

"Recalling its resolutions 44/236 of 22 December 1989, 48/188 of 21 December 1993, 49/22 A of 2 December 1994, 49/22 B of 20 December 1994,

* The report of the Committee on this agenda item will be issued in several parts, under the symbol A/52/629 and addenda.

50/117 A and B of 20 December 1995 and 51/185 of 16 December 1996 and Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/45 of 26 July 1996,

"Taking into account that the natural phenomenon commonly known as "El Niño" has had an acute impact in several regions of the world, with particular severity and frequency in the coastal countries of the Pacific Ocean,

"Noting that El Niño has a cyclical character and causes great damage to the world's population, economy and environment, particularly in developing countries, among which the least developed countries, the small island developing States and the landlocked countries are the most vulnerable,

"Considering that said phenomenon has produced devastating effects, resulting in large material, economic and human losses, especially in the coastal countries of the Pacific Ocean and, in particular, in developing countries, small island States and landlocked countries,

"Acknowledging with concern the possible effects that El Niño may have on global weather patterns, such as abnormal droughts and precipitation around the world, leading to a shortage in world food supplies and famine in several regions that could extend over a number of years,

"Taking into account that the major El Niño events of this century have occurred fairly regularly and are often preceded by a number of distinct warning signs, which, with an appropriate increase and exchange of data and information, could assist in the modelling and prediction of its recurrence and enhance the capabilities of affected countries to mitigate the negative social, economic and environmental impacts that the phenomenon causes,

"Considering also that the national efforts of the countries affected have been insufficient owing to the magnitude of the natural disaster and that international cooperation and solidarity therefore become indispensable,

"1. Invites States to incorporate in sustainable development programmes, at the national, regional and international levels, strategies to prevent, mitigate and rehabilitate the damages caused by natural disasters;

"2. Commends the national, regional and subregional efforts of affected countries, particularly those of developing countries, that have taken measures in order to reduce the impact of El Niño;

"3. Urges the Secretary-General to promote the creation of an international comprehensive cooperation mechanism including early warning as well as the development of long-term strategies that would lead to the prevention, mitigation and rehabilitation of damages caused by El Niño; such measures should include financial assistance, the transfer of appropriate technology and wide dissemination of information and knowledge,

within the framework of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction and, as part of the activities of the Decade and as part of the International Framework of Action for the Decade,[1] the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States[2] and the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World: Guidelines for Natural Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and Mitigation and the Plan of Action contained therein;[3]

"4. Urges the organizations of the United Nations system, especially the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Meterological Organization, the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the United Nations Environment Programme, as well as the International Council of Scientific Unions, within the framework of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, to contribute further to a comprehensive approach and study of El Niño and to intensify their cooperation with the regions affected by the phenomenon, especially with developing countries, small island States and landlocked countries;

"5. Invites States, intergovernmental organizations and all those participating in the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction to provide technical and financial assistance to developing countries to support global and regional observation systems and research, including the dissemination of data on El Niño, to prevent, mitigate and redress the negative effects of the phenomenon;

"6. Requests the Secretary-General, within the context of paragraph 3 of the present resolution, to promote an intergovernmental meeting of experts and scientists in order to facilitate the exchange of information and national experiences related to the monitoring of El Niño as well as to strategies for the reduction of its impact;

"7. Also requests the Secretary-General to invite to the meeting, requested in paragraph 6 above, as special guests, representatives of academic and scientific institutions devoted to the study and analysis of El Niño, and to provide the meeting with the reports of regional meetings and symposiums specializing in the phenomenon;

"8. Urges the Secretary-General to include the El Niño phenomenon and its consequences in the ongoing activities of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction to improve the effectiveness and increase

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[1] See resolution 44/236, annex.

[2] Report of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Bridgetown, Barbados, 25 April-6 May 1994 (United Nations publication E.94.I.18 and corrigenda), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[3] A/CONF.172/9, chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.

international coordination of early-warning systems with regard to natural and similar disasters;

"9. Recommends that long-term public awareness and information programmes related to natural disasters induced by El Niño and similar disasters with an adverse impact on the environment be integrated into comprehensive national disaster management programmes that focus on preventive strategies for risk reduction and that these programmes be included as integral elements of United Nations support for social and economic development programmes;

"10. Requests that proposals for effective and coordinated international mechanisms for early warning pertaining to the periodic occurrence of hazards associated with El Niño be considered within the implementation of the International Framework of Action for the Decade and the Yokohama Strategy and its Plan of Action;

"11. Requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly in its fifty-third session a report on the implementation of the present resolution, including proposals on how the United Nations system might be enhanced so as to enable it to coordinate effective action;

"12. Decides to include a sub-item entitled 'The El Niño phenomenon' in the provisional agenda of its fifty-third session, under the agenda item entitled 'Sustainable development and international economic cooperation'."

3. At the 47th meeting, on 4 December, the Vice-Chairman of the Committee, Mr. Hans-Peter Glanzer (Austria), introduced a draft resolution entitled "International cooperation to reduce the impact of the El Niño phenomenon" (A/C.2/52/L.37), submitted on the basis of informal consultations held on draft resolution A/C.2/52/L.20.

4. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.2/52/L.37 (see para. 7).

5. In the light of the adoption of draft resolution A/C.2/52/L.37, draft resolution A/C.2/52/L.20 was withdrawn by its sponsors.

6. At the same meeting, upon the proposal of the Chairman, the Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly that it take note of the report of the Secretary-General on the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (A/52/560) and the report of the Secretary-General on improved effectiveness of early-warning systems with regard to natural and similar disasters (A/52/561) (see para. 8).

III. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SECOND COMMITTEE

7. The Second Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

International cooperation to reduce the impact of the El Niño phenomenon

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 44/236 of 22 December 1989, 48/188 of 21 December 1993, 49/22 A of 2 December 1994, 49/22 B of 20 December 1994, 50/117 A and B of 20 December 1995 and 51/185 of 16 December 1996 and Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/45 of 26 July 1996,

Taking into account that the El Niño Southern Oscillation Phenomenon, commonly known as "El Niño", has had an acute impact in several regions of the world, with particular severity and frequency in the coastal countries of the Pacific Ocean,

Noting that El Niño has a recurring character and has produced disastrous effects, resulting in large material, economic, human and environmental losses, with particular impact in the coastal countries of the Pacific Ocean, especially in developing countries,

Acknowledging with concern the possible effects that El Niño may have on global weather patterns, such as abnormal droughts and precipitation around the world, leading to food shortages and famine in several regions which could extend over a number of years and which may have potential impacts on world food supplies,

Taking into account that the major El Niño events of this century have occurred fairly regularly and are often preceded by a number of distinct warning signs, which, with an appropriate increase in and exchange of data and information, could assist in the modelling and prediction of its recurrence and enhance the capabilities of affected countries to mitigate the negative social, economic and environmental impacts that the phenomenon causes,

Acknowledging the need to enhance international and national efforts for a better scientific understanding of the origins of the El Niño phenomenon,

Considering also that the national efforts of the countries affected have been insufficient owing to the magnitude of the natural disaster and that international cooperation and solidarity therefore become indispensable, in particular in the area of capacity-building,

Reaffirming that disaster reduction forms an integral part of the sustainable development strategies and national development plans of vulnerable countries and communities,

1. Invites States to incorporate in sustainable development programmes, at the national, regional and international levels, strategies to prevent, mitigate and rehabilitate the damage caused by natural disasters;

2. Calls upon States, relevant intergovernmental bodies and all others involved in the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction to participate actively in the financial and technical support for Decade

activities, including those related to international cooperation to reduce the impact of the El Niño phenomenon, in order to ensure the implementation of the International Framework of Action for the Decade,[4] in particular with a view to translating the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World: Guidelines for Natural Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and Mitigation and its Plan of Action[5] into concrete disaster reduction programmes and activities;

3. Commends the national, regional and subregional efforts of affected countries, particularly those of developing countries, that have taken measures in order to reduce the impact of El Niño;

4. Requests the Secretary-General to facilitate, within the framework of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, an internationally concerted and comprehensive strategy towards the integration of the prevention, mitigation and rehabilitation of the damages caused by the El Niño phenomenon, including the development of long-term strategies which take into due consideration the need for technical cooperation, financial assistance, the transfer of appropriate technology and the dissemination of existing scientific knowledge, as part of the Decade's activities, the International Framework of Action for the Decade, the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World: Guidelines for Natural Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and Mitigation and its Plan of Action, and taking into account the relevant parts of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States;[6]

5. Calls upon the secretariat of the Decade to continue to facilitate a concerted international approach to improvements in early-warning capacities for natural disasters and similar disasters with adverse impact on the environment, with particular reference to El Niño;[7]

6. Welcomes the establishment of the Inter-agency Task Force on El Niño for cooperative work on the prevention and mitigation of and preparedness for natural disasters related to the El Niño phenomenon;

7. Calls upon the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, especially the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Meteorological Organization, the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Development Programme, as well as the International Council of Scientific Unions and the World Climate Research Programme, within the

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[4] See resolution 44/236, annex.

[5] See A/CONF.172/9, chap. I.

[6] Report of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Bridgetown, Barbados, 25 April-6 May 1994 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.I.18 and corrigenda), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[7] See resolutions 51/185, 49/22 B and 50/117 B.

framework of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, to contribute further to a comprehensive approach and study of El Niño and to intensify their cooperation with the regions affected by the phenomenon, especially with developing countries, small island developing States and landlocked countries;

8. Invites States to support the oceanographic and terrestrial observation networks to observe, describe and predict climate anomalies related to El Niño;

9. Invites States, intergovernmental organizations and all those participating in the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction to provide technical and financial assistance, including national capacity-building, to developing countries to support global and regional observation systems and research, including the dissemination of data on El Niño, to prevent, mitigate and redress the negative effects of the phenomenon;

10. Requests the Secretary-General, within the context of paragraph 4 of the present resolution and within available resources of the secretariat of the Decade, to promote an intergovernmental meeting of experts, including representatives of academic and scientific institutions devoted to the study and analysis of El Niño, in order to facilitate the exchange of information and national experiences related to the monitoring of the phenomenon as well as of strategies for the reduction of its impact and to provide to the meeting the reports of regional meetings and symposia specializing in the phenomenon;

11. Urges the Secretary-General to include the El Niño phenomenon and its consequences in the ongoing activities of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction to improve the effectiveness and increase international coordination of early-warning systems with regard to natural and similar disasters with an adverse impact on the environment;

12. Recommends that long-term public awareness and information programmes related to natural disasters, including those induced by El Niño and similar disasters with an adverse impact on the environment, be integrated into comprehensive national disaster management programmes that focus on preventive strategies for risk reduction and that those programmes be included as integral elements of United Nations support for social and economic development programmes;

13. Requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session a report on the implementation of the present resolution, within the discussion on the implementation of the Decade, under the agenda item entitled "Environment and sustainable development", and including proposals on how to integrate the prevention, mitigation and rehabilitation of the impacts of the El Niño phenomenon into the development of the disaster reduction strategy for the twenty-first century.

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8. The Second Committee also recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft decision:

Reports relating to the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction

The General Assembly takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction[8] and the report of the Secretary-General on improved effectiveness of early-warning systems with regard to natural and similar disasters.[9]

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[8] A/52/560.

[9] A/52/561.